

In the Claims

The following is an amendment to and a complete listing of the claims which replaces all prior listings of claims in this application.

1. (currently amended) A process for the sterile packaging of a prosthetic implant made of polyethylene, including the steps of successively

placing the implant in a flexible, gas-impermeable sachet having an opening adapted to be sealed,

creating a vacuum in the sachet and then sealing its opening,

placing the sachet containing the implant in a gas-impermeable envelope ~~comprising~~ including an opening adapted to be sealed,

establishing an inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope, and thereafter closing the envelope hermetically by sealing its opening,

and thereafter, sterilizing the implant within the sachet and the envelope by irradiation.

2. (previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the closure of the sachet and of the envelope is effected by heat-

sealing their respective openings.

3. (original) The process of Claim 1, wherein the inert gaseous atmosphere formed in the envelope is constituted by argon, nitrogen or a mixture of these gaseous elements.

4. (previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the sachet includes a layer of aluminum.

5. (previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the envelope includes a layer of a polyamide and a layer of a polyethylene.

6. (currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the step of establishing the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope includes:

creating a vacuum around and inside the envelope, and
injecting an inert gas inside the envelope until the pressure inside the envelope reaches a predetermined value less than atmospheric pressure,

and,

after having hermetically closed the envelope, the envelope is subjected to atmospheric pressure so that the inert

gaseous atmosphere in the envelope has a pressure which is not less than the pressure in the sachet.

7. (currently amended) The process of Claim 6, wherein the inert gas is injected into the envelope until the pressure of the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope reaches a predetermined value between 0.3 and 0.7 bar in a calibrated manner.

8. (previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein, before or after irradiation of the implant, an assembly formed by the implant, the sachet and the envelope is placed in a rigid packing whose internal volume is substantially equal to the volume occupied by the assembly.

9. (original) The process of Claim 8, wherein, before placing the assembly formed by the implant, the sachet and the envelope in the rigid packing, the envelope is folded on itself.

10. (previously presented) The process of Claim 8, wherein the rigid packing and the envelope cooperate by being of complementary shapes in order to immobilize the sachet containing the implant.